

REMARKS

In the December 1, 2003 Office Action, claims 1-10 and 12-20 stand rejected as failing to comply with the enablement requirement as well as in view of prior art. Claims 11 and 21 were allowed. No other objections or rejections were made in the Office Action.

Status of Claims and Amendments

In response to the December 1, 2003 Office Action, Applicant has amended claims 1, 6-8, 12-13, and 15-18. Thus, claims 1-21 are pending, with claims 1, 11, 12, 15, and 21 being the only independent claims. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested in view of the following comments.

Interview Summary

On February 25, 2004, the undersigned conducted a personal interview with Examiners Katherine Matecki and Evan Langdon, who are in charge of the above-identified patent application. Applicant wishes to thank Examiners Matecki and Langdon for their courteous interview and the opportunity to discuss the above-identified patent application.

During the interview, rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph were clarified. With regard to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103 over the Koike patent and the Sato patent, it was suggested that claims be amended to define a clearance of the cover member and to incorporate a lack of a sealing lip member in the present invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §112

On page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-10 and 12-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph. In response, Applicant has amended claims 1, 12, and 15 to clarify the language.

Specifically, the Office Action asserted that the reference to the use of centrifugal force in claims 1, 12, and 15 is not supported in the specification. In response, Applicant has deleted the reference to the use of centrifugal force in claims 1, 12, and 15. Therefore, Applicant believes that this rejection is now moot.

Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

On pages 3-6 of the Office Action, claims 1-10 and 12-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,176,446 to Sato ("Sato patent") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,164,577 to Koike ("Koike patent"). In response, Applicant has amended claims 1, 12, and 15.

More specifically, claims 1, 12, and 15 have been amended to recite that the first and second components are arranged adjacent to each other with a micro clearance therebetween, that the first component is rotatable relative to the second component via a bearing that is disposed adjoining at least one of the first and second components in a direction of the rotational axis, and that the water-sealing component assembly has sealing means for preventing invasion of water into the micro clearance and the bearing solely by the water repellency of the water repelling film layer. These limitations are supported by paragraphs starting on page 7, line 14 and page 10, line 1, and Figures 4, 7, 8, and 10. Applicant believes that the Sato patent and the Koike patent do not disclose or suggest the arrangement of claims 1, 12, and 15, whether taken singularly or in combination.

It has been confirmed during the interview of February 25, 2004 that the Office Action asserts that the anti-corrosive layer of the Koike patent applied to the cover member 33a of the Sato patent render obvious the arrangements of claims 1, 12, and 15 of the present invention. Applicant believes that the Koike patent and the Sato patent do not anticipate or suggest the arrangement of claims 1, 12, and 15 as amended above.

More specifically, Applicant believes that the Sato patent and the Koike patent do not disclose or suggest, either singularly or in combination, the sealing means that prevents invasion of water into the micro clearance between the first and second components *solely* by the water repellency of the water repellent film. As seen in Figure 6 of the Sato patent, the structure of the Sato patent has a seal 34. Therefore, even if the water repellent film layer of the Koike patent (assuming *arguendo* that the Koike patent does disclose or suggest a water repellent film layer) is applied to the cover member 33a of the Sato patent, the Sato patent and the Koike patent still do not disclose or suggest the sealing means as defined by claims 1, 12, and 15 of the present invention, because the Sato patent discloses a seal 34 that performs the sealing function and thus the sealing is *not* achieved solely by the water repellency of the water repellent film layer. Thus, Applicant believes that the Sato patent and the Koike patent do not disclose or suggest the sealing means of claims 1, 12, and 15, either singularly or in combination.

Furthermore, Applicant believes that the Sato patent and the Koike patent fail to show or suggest, either singularly or in combination, a micro clearance between the first and second components. Claims 1, 12, and 15 as amended above require the micro clearance formed between the first and second components as part of the sealing means. Since the

sealing means is defined as being for preventing invasion of water into the micro clearance *solely* by the water repellency of the water repelling film layer, the micro clearance has to be formed such that the micro clearance together with the water repelling film layer can *by itself* prevent invasion of water therein. The gap between the cover member 33a and the shaft 15 of the Sato patent appears, however, too wide to be able to prevent invasion of water therein. Thus, Applicant believes that the Sato patent and the Koike patent do not disclose or suggest the micro clearance of claims 1, 12, and 15, either singularly or in combination.

Still furthermore, Applicant believes that the Koike patent and the Sato patent, either singularly or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest the bearing disposed adjoining in the direction of the rotational axis at least one of the first and second components. As shown in Figure 6 of the Sato patent, the cover member 33a and the bearing 35 are arranged in the direction of the spool shaft 15 with the seal 34 disposed therebetween. Also, the spool shaft 15, about which the cover member 33a rotates, is clearly not disposed adjoining the bearing 35 in the direction of the spool shaft 15. In other words, neither of the cover member 33a and the spool shaft 15 is disposed adjoining the bearing 35, as required by claims 1, 12, and 15. Thus, Applicant believes that the Sato patent and the Koike patent do not disclose or suggest, either singularly or in combination, the bearing disposed adjoining in the direction of the rotational axis at least one of the first and second components, as required in claims 1, 12, and 15.

Therefore, Applicant believes that claims 1, 12, and 15 are not anticipated or rendered obvious by the Sato patent and the Koike patent, whether taken singularly or in combination.

With regard to claims 2-10, 13-14 and 16-20, they depend from claims 1, 12 and 15, and therefore are narrower. The amendments to claims 6-8, 13, and 16-18 are merely to correct informalities and to conform the language with the amended claims 1 and 15. Since Applicant believes that claims 1, 12 and 15 as currently amended are not disclosed or suggested by the Sato patent and the Koike patent, Applicant believes that dependent claims 2-10, 13-14 and 16-20 cannot be disclosed or suggested by the prior art record.

In view of the above comments, Applicant respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn in view of the above comments and amendments.


Allowed Subject Matter

On page 6 of the Office Action, claims 11 and 21 were indicated as being allowed. Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for this indication of allowance.

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In view of the foregoing amendment and comments, Applicant respectfully asserts that claims 1-21 are now in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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